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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#)  
SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS SITREP  
#10: JANUARY 23, 2006: FEW REPORTED PROBLEMS WITH PA  
SECURITY FORCES VOTING

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Voting by Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces continued for a third and final day, January 23, with turnout reported around 82 percent of registered voters at the conclusion of the second day of voting. ConGen contacts expect final turnout over 90 percent of registered security forces personnel. While Palestinian contacts reported some problems, including a Palestinian who on January 22 attempted to enter a polling station in Rafah with hand grenades and several Hamas complaints about voting irregularities, the process has proceeded without serious disruption. PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat reported to the Consul General that Election Day modalities for the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been finalized with Israel. Both Erekat and PLC candidate Muhammad Dahlan expected a tight finish between Fatah and Hamas. "Third Way" candidate Salam Fayyad expects a positive showing for his national slate. End summary.

Few Reported Problems With  
PA Security Forces Voting  
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12. (C) PA Security Forces (PASF) voting, which commenced January 21, has proceeded with few serious incidents of disruption. By midday January 21, the CEC reported turnout at approximately 22 percent. By midday of January 22, the CEC reported that approximately 30,000 PASF personnel (about 50 percent) had cast ballots. By the end of the second day of voting on January 22, turnout was reported at approximately 82 percent of all registered PASF personnel, with a final day of balloting scheduled on January 23. (Note: The NSF commander in Ramallah January 21 filed a request with the CEC that 335 officers serving in the West Bank, but registered in Gaza, be allowed to vote in the West Bank. The CEC has yet to respond positively to this request. End note.) The PASF had reportedly secured all polling stations, with no few serious problems. (Note: PA police confirmed January 22 that security personnel arrested a Palestinian who attempted to enter a polling station in Rafah while holding hand grenades. End note.)

13. (C) There were some reports of voting irregularities, including PASF personnel claiming illiteracy to polling station workers and requesting assistance from a third party, typically another member of the PASF. Hamas on January 22 filed complaints with the CEC requesting that voter registration lists be posted at entrances to polling stations, which the PASF opposed. As a compromise, the CEC decided to allow representatives of each of the factions an opportunity to view the lists at the polling stations. Hamas also lodged a complaint that PASF were instructed and

intimated to vote for Fatah candidates.

Erekat: Modalities For  
Elections Completed

14. (C) PLO Chief Negotiator and PLC candidate Sa'eb Erekat January 21 told the Consul General that voting for the PASF was proceeding smoothly. Erekat reported that he and the CEC held a good meeting with Israeli General Mishlev on January 20 where they concluded all details regarding election modalities for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The IDF agreed to facilitate the movement of ballot material and election workers and would ease up on "flying" checkpoints. Israeli police in Jerusalem January 22 arrested a Hamas district candidate, a PFLP candidate running on its national list, and seven other activists who were caught putting up campaign paraphernalia. On the elections, Erekat expected a close race to the finish between Fatah and Hamas. (Comment: This assessment is notable, as Erekat has previously predicted a solid Fatah victory in the elections. End comment.)

Fayyad: Reasonable  
Showing For "Third Way"

15. (C) "Third Way" candidate Salam Fayyad confirmed to the Consul General January 21 that his campaign manager in Gaza, Ghazi Shabiyya, was shot in the stomach after reportedly being lured to a scheduled meeting. According to Palestinian contacts, Shabiyya's injuries were not critical. Fayyad said that he wasn't certain if the shooting represented an isolated incident or was an indication of something more serious related to his campaign. Fayyad confirmed, however, that there was significant intimidation of "Third Way"

activists in the Northern West Bank. On the campaign itself, Fayyad said that the underlying trend for the "Third Way" was positive, and he expected a "reasonable" showing. (Note: A new poll from Khalil Shikaki reported "Third Way" polling at three percent, behind Mustafa Barghouti's "Independent Palestine" (five percent), Hamas (35 percent), and Fatah (42 percent). End note.)

Dahlan More Confident About  
Fatah Prospects in Gaza

16. (C) During a January 22 telecon with the Consul General, Gaza PLC candidate Muhammad Dahlan said that he was more optimistic about Fatah's chances in Rafah and Khan Yunis. He reported that he has concentrated his efforts in those two districts, adding that he has conducted approximately 10 rallies per day, with turnout anywhere between 1,000 to 20,000 people at each event. Dahlan said that he was also optimistic that Fatah would win one to two seats in the North Gaza (Jabaliyah) district. Efforts were still ongoing to get independent Fatah-affiliated candidates to withdraw from the district races. (Note: In response to interventions from senior Fatah officials, several independent Fatah candidates dropped out of the district races over the weekend, including PLC members Muhammad Hourani (Hebron) and Ahmad al-Batsh (Jerusalem). Approximately 40 of the 142 Fatah independents have officially withdrawn. End note.)

Summary of Local  
Press Coverage

17. (SBU) The main story January 23 in the main three Palestinian dailies focused on statements from jailed West Bank Fatah leader and PLC candidate Marwan Barghuti, who called for "intensive participation" in the PLC elections. In an interview with al-Jazeera, Barghuti's first since being imprisoned, he asserted that Fatah was still able to lead the Palestinian people to freedom and independence.

-- The dailies also featured statements from PA President Mahmud Abbas, who urged all Palestinians to exercise their right to vote and reiterated that the PASF would cooperate fully with the CEC to prevent elections violations.

-- Al-Quds carried the results of a public opinion poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Political and Survey Research which predicted that 42 percent would vote for Fatah, while approximately 35 percent would vote for the Hamas slate, "Reform and Change".

-- Al-Ayyam on January 21 led with a report Gaza Hamas leader and PLC candidate Mahmud Zahar said that Hamas will seek, after winning the legislative elections, to re-formulate Palestinian society in all areas in accordance with Islam and that it will move the government away from corruption, chaos, bribery, and patronage.

Op-eds:

-- Ashraf Ajrami wrote in Al-Ayyam that as Palestinians prepare to vote, they must consider the choices they are making so that they don't fall in a dangerous situation. Talal Okal wrote in Al-Ayyam that on the eve of elections, everyone is keeping an eye on whether and how Hamas will participate in the political process.

-- Salah Sobani wrote in al-Quds that Hamas' main support stems from an increasingly religious public and the lack of any positive political horizon, including an end to the occupation.

-- Ali A'war opined in al-Quds that since Hamas is now a major player in the Palestinian national movement, it is obliged to present a clear political program to meet the aspiration of the Palestinian people.

WALLES